

2025

University of Richmond

Sustainability Report & Path to 2027



University of Richmond
Sustainability



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Letter from the Director

At the University of Richmond, sustainability means creating environmental, social, and economic conditions that foster the health and well-being of people and the planet, now and for generations to come. For more than two decades, we have worked toward this vision of sustainability through intentional leadership, interdisciplinary collaboration, and high-impact initiatives that reflect our responsibility as stewards of both resources and knowledge.

The urgency of the global challenges we face, including climate change, biodiversity loss, resource depletion, and rising social inequities, compels institutions like ours to act boldly and purposefully. Guided by the 2010 Climate Action Plan, the 2019 Sustainability Plan, and longstanding institutional commitments, we aim to weave sustainability into UR's academics, operations, and community life.

In response, leaders from across the University of Richmond have transformed sustainability from aspiration to action. Landmark initiatives accomplished as part of the 2019 Sustainability Plan, such as development of the Eco-Corridor and investment in Spider Solar, have reshaped campus operations. The Sustainability Minor and experiential programs like the Sustainable Solutions Challenge have strengthened academic integration. Flagship efforts such as Rethink Waste and the River City Project prepare students to think critically, act ethically, and lead creatively. Strategic investments in sustainability staffing, faculty appointments, and administrative partnerships with University Advancement and Communications have elevated sustainability to a core institutional priority.

This report marks a period of momentum and possibility. This year, we extended our Sustainability Plan through 2027 to ensure that key initiatives have the time and resources to reach their full potential. Together, we are preparing the next generation to lead in building a more just, resilient, and sustainable world.



Rob Andrejewski
Director of Sustainability

About the Sustainability Report & Path to 2027



This document showcases the University of Richmond's progress in meeting the goals in the Sustainability Plan and highlights UR's 2024 Sustainability Tracking, Assessment, and Rating System (STARS) submission. In the following pages, you will see performance ratings on the 93 Sustainability Plan initiatives, narratives demonstrating sustainability in action, and results of the STARS report.

The report has been organized into four categories, which align with the structure of the Sustainability Plan and STARS. The categories are as follows: Academics, Engagement, Operations, and Planning & Administration. The Sustainability Report & Path to 2027 represents sustainability across the entire University. The information was compiled by the Office for Sustainability, but the actions taken to meet our aims are the work of our entire community.

The aim of this document is to recognize our successes, point to priority areas for the next two years, and to guide conversations on how to move forward.

SUSTAINABILITY REPORT SYMBOLS

The symbols below provide a quick demonstration of our performance on Sustainability Plan initiatives. You will see these symbols throughout the document.



Action is complete.



Action has not started.



Action is in progress.



Action will not be completed by 2027.

AASHE STARS

In addition to a progress report on the Sustainability Plan, this document presents the information and scoring from the Sustainability Tracking, Assessment, and Rating System (STARS), an enterprise-wide evaluation of sustainability on campus developed by the Association for Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education (AASHE).

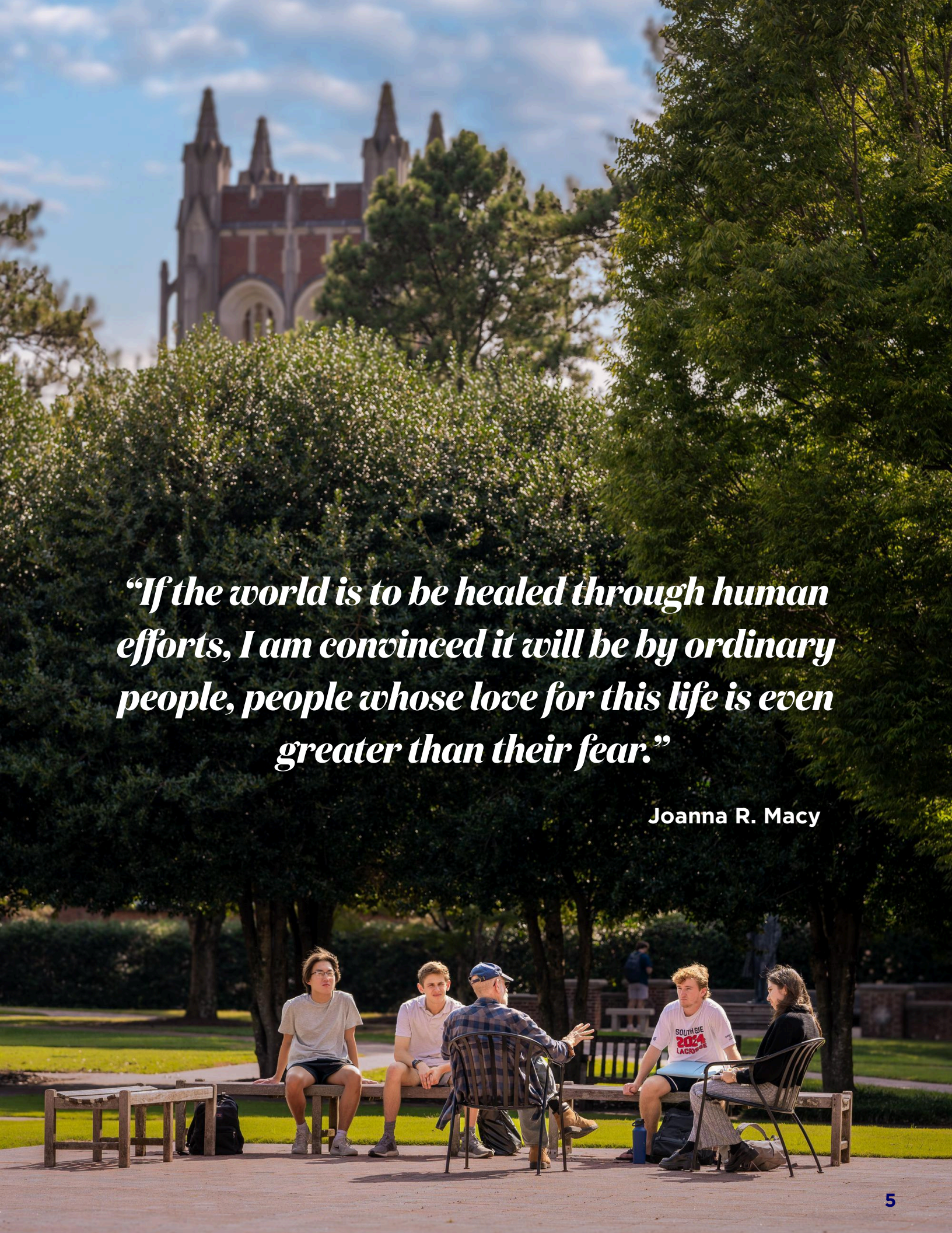
STARS measures sustainability performance and the progress we have made in the same four areas outlined in the Sustainability Plan: academics, engagement, operations, and planning & administration. STARS is a voluntary self-reporting assessment that provides a common standard of measurement for sustainability in higher education. The University worked with external consultant Greener U to validate our reporting data.



STARS Silver
2013, 2016



STARS Gold
2019, 2022, 2024

A group of five people are sitting on a wooden bench outdoors. From left to right: a woman in a grey t-shirt and black shorts, a man in a light blue polo shirt and shorts, a man in a blue plaid shirt and a blue cap sitting in a black metal chair, a man in a white t-shirt with 'SOUTH SIDE 2024 LACROSSE' on it and shorts, and a woman in a black jacket and grey pants sitting in a black metal chair. They appear to be in conversation. The background is filled with lush green trees, and a large, multi-towered Gothic-style building is visible in the distance under a blue sky with light clouds.

“If the world is to be healed through human efforts, I am convinced it will be by ordinary people, people whose love for this life is even greater than their fear.”

Joanna R. Macy

History of Sustainability at UR

James M Ball Jr., in cooperation with the Virginia Outdoor Foundation, established a conservation easement of 104 acres in Goochland County for University of Richmond to use for educational purposes

Robert R. Merhige, Jr. Center for Environmental Studies established

Environmental Studies Program established

Weinstein Hall becomes first LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) Certified building in Central Virginia

President Ayers signs Presidents' Climate Commitment; Commitment to LEED Silver or better for new construction; RENEW student group founded

1968

1985

2000

2004

2007

1971

1991

2003

2005

2008

Student Beth Marschak helped organize the city of Richmond's first Earth Day event

Recycling program begins

President Cooper signs Talloires Declaration; Provost establishes Environmental Awareness Group (EAG)

Earth Lodge Living Learning Community created; Dual degree programs with Duke initiated

Department of Geography and the Environment founded

Office for Sustainability established; UR becomes the 100th school to sign the Talloires Declaration on the Civic Roles and Social Responsibilities of Higher Education; RENEW becomes GreenUR; Inaugural greenhouse gas inventory conducted

205 kW solar array installed on roof of Weinstein Recreation & Wellness Center; Faculty Learning Community on Climate Change Education; UR signs the American Campuses Act on Climate Pledge

Awarded Silver rating on Sustainability, Tracking, and Assessment Rating System (STARS)

Rethink Waste campaign launched, UR commits to 75% waste diversion by 2025; First Rethink Waste basketball and football games; First Ecochallenge; UR joins We Are Still In

Green Office Program founded; USGBC chapter started

2009

2011

2013

2015

2017

2010

2012

2014

2016

2018

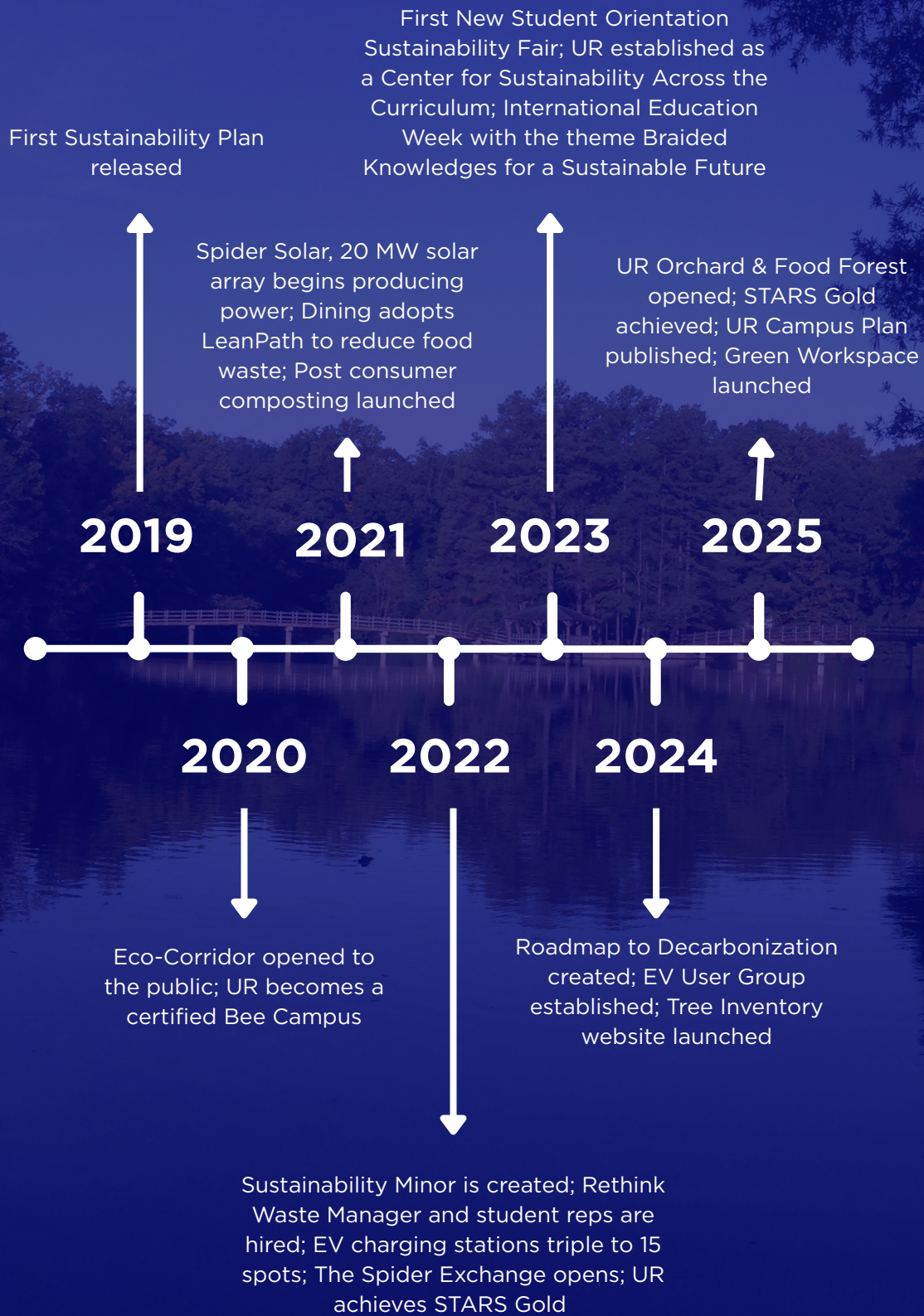
Sustainability Working Group (SWG) founded; Community Garden started; Climate Action Plan Completed

Parking Lot Project created as part of Tucker Boatwright Festival; Environmental Justice Think Tank created

Sustainability and Environmental Awareness Committee established; Eco-Corridor Faculty Think Tank formed

River City Project created; Dual degree program with VCU started; solar pilot on University Forest Apartments; University stops burning coal; UR begins purchasing green power

Sustainability Internship Program reestablished; Awarded Silver STARS rating for second time





Academics

A photograph of two hikers on a forest trail. The hiker on the left is wearing a blue cap, a plaid shirt, blue jeans, and a brown backpack. The hiker on the right is wearing a red hoodie, tan cargo pants, and blue gloves. They are standing on a dirt path with large tree roots, looking up at the trees. In the background, a body of water is visible through the trees.

*What is the role of education
in a changing world?*

Sustainability Report: Academics

OVERVIEW

At the heart of UR’s mission is to educate in an academically challenging, intellectually vibrant, and collaborative community dedicated to the holistic development of students and the production of scholarly and creative work. A Richmond education prepares students for lives of purpose, thoughtful inquiry, and responsible leadership in a diverse world, and the integration of sustainability across the curriculum is integral to ensuring that UR students are prepared to meet the grand challenges of our time.

Goal 1 of the Sustainability Plan supports the “integration of sustainability into a University of Richmond education.” Significant progress has been made on the incorporation of sustainability across the curriculum.

PROGRESS SINCE 2019

The pie chart represents the percentage of actions from Goal 1 of the Sustainability Plan that are completed, in progress, or have not been started.



DATA HIGHLIGHTS



161

Students in sustainability-focused majors and minors in 2024



83

Professors conducting sustainability-related research from 2021 to 2023

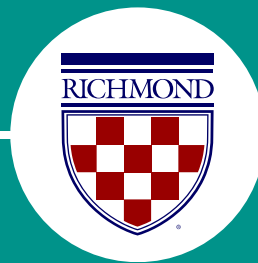


146

Sustainability-based research articles published from 2021 to 2023

Sustainability Plan






Goal 1: Academics



SUSTAINABILITY AS MEASURED AT UNIVERSITY OF RICHMOND

"Integrate sustainability into a University of Richmond education."

1.1 Increase the opportunity for University of Richmond students to engage in coursework focused on sustainability.

-  1.1.1 Across the five schools, support the efforts of faculty, staff, and students working to grow the number of courses that focus on a holistic concept of sustainability (including social, economic, and environmental dimensions) or examine an issue or topic using sustainability as a lens.
-  1.1.2 Provide support for faculty, staff, and students who seek to explore incorporation of sustainability into common learning experiences, including the general education curriculum.
-  1.1.3 Support the efforts of faculty, staff, and students who are exploring the development of a formal sustainability education program, including a minor in sustainability.
-  1.1.4 Investigate the establishment of an 's-designation' for sustainability courses to enhance the rigor of the sustainability course tracking system and increase the visibility of new and existing sustainability courses.
-  1.1.5 Develop UR-specific resources that outline and measure the sustainability knowledge, attributes, and skills a student is expected to demonstrate through completion of a sustainability-related course, program, or unit.

1.2 Support the integration of sustainability into co-curricular initiatives and high-impact educational practices, including first year experience, themed semesters, living learning communities, undergraduate research, study abroad, community-based learning, internships, and capstone courses.



1.2.1 Further develop a University of Richmond sustainability living lab program that connects coursework, research, and campus services and operations.



1.2.2 Partner with Living-Learning Programs, the Center for Civic Engagement, Study Abroad, Student Development, and other campus departments to increase awareness of and participation in sustainability-related immersive educational programs.



1.2.3 Partner with the Office of Alumni and Career Services and Academic Advising to increase the profile and number of sustainability-related career opportunities available to students, including job listings, internships, career fairs, and networking opportunities.

1.3 Strengthen connections and establish incentive structures to support scholarship and teaching across different academic programs and disciplines engaged in sustainability.



1.3.1 Provide resources to help faculty enhance their ability to develop academic initiatives and conduct research related to sustainability, especially across disciplines and in collaboration with others.



1.3.2 Support interdisciplinary scholarship and teaching on innovative topics that address global, systemic problems, including climate change, water scarcity, loss of biodiversity, and land use.



1.3.3 Provide professional development opportunities in sustainability education to assist faculty in all disciplines in creating or reworking sustainability courses and learning outcomes.



1.3.4 Appoint a sustainability faculty fellow to support sustainability research and the integration of sustainability into the curriculum.

Curricular Highlights

Center for Sustainability Across the Curriculum

University of Richmond is a nationally recognized Center for Sustainability Across the Curriculum through a partnership with AASHE. As a Center for Sustainability Across the Curriculum, UR Office for Sustainability leadership facilitated a free one-day workshop in 2023 to faculty, staff, and administrators from other colleges and universities in Virginia and the region (in addition to faculty at UR). The aim of the workshop was to share best educational development practices for sustainability with peer institutions across the region. In the summer of 2025, the Office for Sustainability partnered with Partners for the Arts on a unique one-day offering of the River City Project in collaboration with their summer Institute for regional K-12 educators.

River City Project

The River City Project (RCP), UR's two-day, immersive sustainability-focused faculty development workshop, is focused on creating the space for faculty to incorporate the practice and principles of sustainability into their curriculum by exploring various sustainability frameworks, networking with others, practicing place-based education, and engaging in interdisciplinary collaboration. RCP is facilitated by the Office for Sustainability and has quarterly cohort gatherings.



The River City Project has afforded me the opportunity to deeply engage with principles of sustainability while getting to know a stellar group of faculty members across disciplines.”

Danielle Stokes
Assistant Professor of Law

Sustainability Minor

Launched in 2022, the interdisciplinary Sustainability Minor, housed in the Department of Geography, Environment, and Sustainability, offers students the opportunity to pursue core competencies in sustainability. The minor in Sustainability includes two required courses and one course from each of the following groupings: Economic Sustainability, Environmental Sustainability, and Social Sustainability, plus an Acting for Positive Change Requirement.

Integration of Sustainability Education into Well 100

Well 100: An Introduction to College Life at the University of Richmond is a required, non-unit bearing course, that all incoming students are required to take. Beginning in 2022, foundational sustainability education was included as part of the curriculum, providing all incoming students an introduction to sustainability.

Support for Co-Curricular Education

Co-curricular education is core to cultivating a campus culture of sustainability. The Office for Sustainability supports university-wide efforts of co-curricular education through signature programs such as International Education Week, the Ecochallenge, the coordination and reposting of campus-wide sustainability events, student orientation programming, education for all new faculty and staff, the RVA Environmental Film Festival, an annual Sustainability Banquet, and a Spiders Guide to Sustainable Living.

Guest Lecturing and Course Modules

In support of integrating sustainability across the curriculum at the University of Richmond, the Office for Sustainability offers guest lecturing in a diverse array of topics for faculty teaching at the University. Course Modules provided by the Office for Sustainability offer foundational education in the following topic areas:

- Intro to Sustainability
- Climate and Environmental Justice
- Climate Action at UR
- Perspectives on Planning

School of Arts & Sciences Sustainability Award

In an effort to incentivize sustainability research and scholarship, the School of Arts & Sciences annual symposium's Sustainability Award recognizes student projects that exemplify the University of Richmond's commitment to sustainability.

Research

Faculty and students across UR are actively engaged in sustainability research in fields including environmental management, governance, cultural heritage, placemaking, decolonization, biodiversity, food, equity, justice, human rights, well-being, development, land use, policy, ecology, climate, energy, nature, resilience, urbanization, air quality, pollution, and green technologies. 83 faculty members conducted sustainability-related research between 2021 and 2023.

Robins School of Business Sustainability Curriculum

Starting in the Fall of 2023, Dean Quinones created a committee to develop a framework for what sustainability across the curriculum should look like for the Robins School of Business (RSB). Beginning in the Fall of 2024, RSB appointed a Faculty Director of Sustainability to guide sustainability efforts, including management of the Sustainable Solutions Challenge and creation of a student chapter of Net Impact.

Green Spiders Abroad

In a collaboration between the Center for Global Engagement and the Office for Sustainability, Green Spiders Abroad provides students studying internationally with the opportunity to engage with their host community through a lens of sustainability. Students pursue self-directed projects with guidance from the University and report back on these initiatives when they return to campus.





STARS Report: Academics

SUSTAINABILITY, TRACKING, ASSESSMENT & RATING SYSTEM



CURRICULUM

Undergraduate Program

The Minor in Sustainability empowers students to shape a just and sustainable world.

Graduate Program

The University of Richmond School of Law has a 30-year tradition of scholarship in environmental law, while SPCS offers programs like a Permaculture Design course.

Immersive Experience

Key programs include Sophomore Scholars in Residence with course offerings such as “Amazonia Connected” and “Toxic Communities”.

Incentives for Developing Courses

The River City Project provides incentives for developing and enhancing sustainability education into courses across the curriculum.

Campus as a Living Laboratory

Courses such as “Geography of the James River Watershed” explore what defines a place using the local community as the context for learning.

Academic Courses

As of 2025, nearly 20% of course offerings at UR are sustainability courses.

Learning Outcomes

The Degree programs in Environmental Studies and Geography as well as the interdisciplinary Sustainability Minor offer learning outcomes in sustainability.

Sustainability Literacy Assessment

Opportunity exists to fulfill this credit through conducting a campus wide sustainability literacy assessment with a combined cultural assessment.

RESEARCH

Research and Scholarship

As of 2025, 28% of faculty are engaged in sustainability related research, and a comprehensive list of related research criteria were developed.

Support for Sustainability Research

There is support for sustainability research programs include A&S Next, the River City Project, and Faculty Learning Communities.

Open Access to Research

UR's Scholarship Repository brings together and provides open access to the intellectual content of its faculty, students and many centers and programs.



A photograph of three people (two men and one woman) in a meeting, looking at a globe. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent teal filter.

Academic Priorities on the Path to 2027

SUSTAINABILITY PLAN PRIORITIES

Living Lab (1.2.1)

There is considerable opportunity to build upon existing place-based and experiential learning programs, beginning with a stakeholder review of a living lab overview document developed by the Office for Sustainability. We have identified transforming the wastewater treatment remnant in the Eco-Corridor into an educational asset as a potential pilot project.

Learning Outcomes and Competencies (1.1.5)

Although some signature programs already feature sustainability learning outcomes and competencies, opportunity exists to develop learning outcomes and competencies related to sustainability across all five schools.

Faculty Fellow (1.3.4)

Creating a designated Faculty Fellow in sustainability through the Office for Sustainability could provide the opportunity to leverage faculty expertise in all areas related to academic opportunity for the campus.

EMERGING WORK

University Wide Outreach

Significant effort has been taken to integrate sustainability across the curriculum through partnership amongst the five schools through university-wide programs such as the River City Project. Recent initiatives supported by leadership in A&S and the Robins School of Business could be replicated by other schools.

Literacy Assessment

Opportunity exists to develop a campus-wide sustainability literacy assessment to assess both environmental and sustainability literacy for the campus.

Engagement



How can engagement support the creation of a sustainability culture?

Sustainability Report: Engagement

OVERVIEW

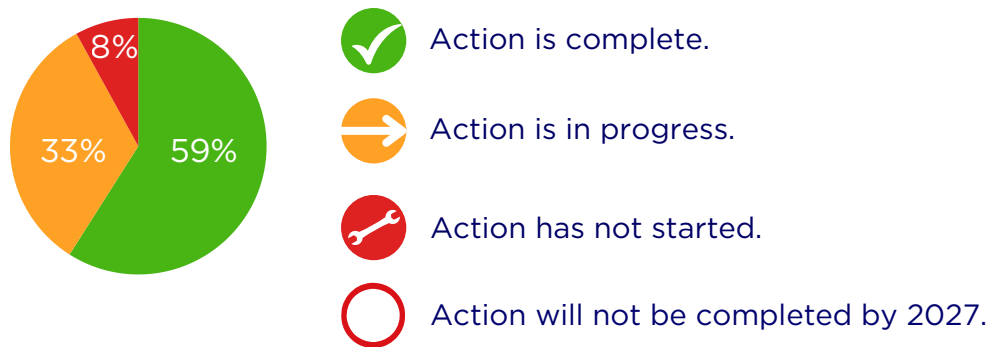
Engagement at University of Richmond can look like joining a student group, attending faculty development workshops, interning or collaborating with the Office for Sustainability, or learning to incorporate lifestyles changes with Rethink Waste.

Goal 2 of the Sustainability Plan supports efforts to increase understanding of sustainability issues and provide resources and opportunities for individuals and groups to enact sustainable behaviors on campus.

Efforts to adopt behaviors that have a positive effect on campus, the community, and beyond have always been present at Richmond. Weaving sustainability into the fabric of the University, however, necessitates a culture of sustainability.

PROGRESS SINCE 2019

The pie chart represents the percentage of actions from Goal 2 of the Sustainability Plan that are completed, in progress, or have not been started.



DATA HIGHLIGHTS



250+

Posts or stories on social media in 2025



20+

Office for Sustainability events in 2025

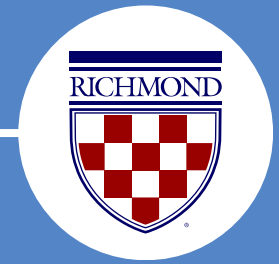


31

Volunteer events held in 2025

Sustainability Plan

Goal 2: Engagement



SUSTAINABILITY AS MEASURED AT UNIVERSITY OF RICHMOND

“Increase understanding of sustainability issues and provide resources and opportunities for individuals and groups to enact sustainable behaviors on campus.”

2.1 Meaningfully feature sustainability in orientation and onboarding activities for all students, staff, and faculty.

- ✓ 2.1.1 Create the opportunity for all new UR students to participate in orientation activities and first-year experiences that prominently feature sustainability.
- ✓ 2.1.2 Add a formal, interactive component of new employee orientation that supports knowledge of and active engagement with sustainability initiatives at the University and department/office level

2.2 Improve the visibility of sustainability on campus.

- ➔ 2.2.1 Design and promote a campus sustainability tour, both online and on campus, and explore incorporating sustainability into official UR campus tours.
- ✓ 2.2.2 Post prominent signage and educational displays that highlight campus environmental stewardship efforts.
- ✓ 2.2.3 Identify, recognize, and promote the work undertaken by sustainability experts and professionals on campus.
- ✓ 2.2.4 Develop cohesive sustainability-based marketing and branding efforts across campus in coordination with appropriate personnel.

2.3 Establish and promote training and education for students, staff, and faculty in environmental sustainability practices.


- ➔ 2.3.1 In partnership with appropriate personnel on campus, design online and in-person training programs on University sustainability initiatives and practices, including recycling, energy conservation, and sustainable purchasing.

 2.3.2 Raise awareness of and increase participation in existing programs that promote personal sustainability (i.e., Green Office Program, Green Room Program, Be a Green Spider quizzes, etc.) and develop new resources that support environmentally responsible living and working.

 2.3.3 Establish and train a cohort of employee and student sustainability peer educators to increase awareness and expand engagement across campus.

2.4 Design and execute a comprehensive menu of sustainability events, programs, and activities for student, staff, and faculty.

 2.4.1 Create a directory of existing sustainability and sustainability-related programs, events, and initiatives offered across campus.

 2.4.2 Work with partners on campus and in the community to generate and implement new programming ideas and activities that will increase understanding of sustainability and support the creation of a culture of sustainability.

 2.4.3 Collaborate with existing speaker series organizers to bring sustainability thought leaders to campus and broaden the audience for sustainability topics.

Engagement Highlights

Outreach Campaigns

In order to establish a campus-wide culture of sustainability, diverse tactics have been utilized. This includes a wide range of media outreach, such as the use of social media, newsletters, and targeted campaigns, but also the offering of programs that partner with departments and groups across campus. Notably, the Campus Race to Zero Waste program and the International Education Week Ecochallenge include multiple opportunities for engagement in the form of volunteering, events, reflection, and connection with others on campus.

Community Partnerships

The Bonner Center for Civic Engagement is a powerful and dedicated department on campus committed to maintaining community partnerships in the greater Richmond region. In addition to playing a pivotal role in connecting students, faculty, and staff to community organizations, the Bonner Center also supports important initiatives in Richmond that seek to improve community and environmental health. One example of this is their longstanding partnership with the City of Richmond Office of Sustainability. The Office of Sustainability has been a key co-educator, frequently speaking in classes and hosting research projects for students for the last eight years.



Working with students in the Eco-Corridor is very rewarding. An important component of the work is building community through making connections with one another while also learning about the local environment. This gives students and volunteers a feeling of attachment to this beautiful natural area and helps develop a sense of place."

Joseph Day
Natural Areas Steward
Office for Sustainability

Internship Programs

The Office for Sustainability hires up to 10 student interns each semester. This internship empowers students to develop their understanding of sustainability and create change on campus. Students interact with faculty, staff, and other students in a variety of capacities related to many different aspects of sustainability. Internship position focus areas change from semester to semester and include programming, communications, greenhouse gas accounting, food recovery, the community garden, waste reduction, and more.

Student Groups

A variety of students from different fields of study are passionate about educating others, planning sustainability-related events, and incorporating sustainability into the daily life of our university. Below are some of the student-led groups on campus.

- **GreenUR** leads students in organizing environmental campaigns and hosting sustainability-related events.
- **SEEDS (Students Engaging & Enacting Dialogue on Service)** is a student-run organization that focuses on engaging students in meaningful and sustainable service projects as well as dialogue centered around social justice and environmental issues in specific communities.
- **Environmental Law Society** is a student organization dedicated to learning about and raising awareness of legal issues in the environment.

New Student and New Staff / Faculty Orientation

From the moment that students and employees step on campus, they are offered an introduction to sustainability. All first-year and transfer students attend the Sustainability Fair before classes begin, connecting them with campus and Richmond community sustainability groups. Additionally, employees are introduced to sustainability as a part of their onboarding.

RVA Environmental Film Festival & Global Environmental Speaker Series

Each year, UR has been a part of the Richmond Environmental Film Festival, hosting a film on campus during the weeklong community event. Additionally, the Department of Geography, Environment, & Sustainability, Environmental Studies Program, and Global Studies Program partner to bring speakers and scholars to Richmond to present lectures about our global environment.

Braided Knowledges for a Sustainable Future

Each November, in recognition of International Education Week, the UR community celebrates internationalism and global engagement on campus. In 2023, the University hosted a weeklong summit on local-global sustainability topics with colleagues from around the world. Dubbed “Braided Knowledges for a Sustainable Future: Rivers, Indigenous Communities, Justice,” the event brought local and global scholars and activists into dialogue to bridge the divide between theory and practice, between indigeneity and a separation of people from nature, between city and university.

Indigenous leaders from Aotearoa New Zealand, the Peruvian, Brazilian, and Bolivian Amazon, and the US participated in daily plenary gatherings and roundtable discussions. The particular historical and contemporary experiences of these leaders and their communities vary, but many of the threats they face have a common grounding in colonialism, illegal resource extraction, and the climate crisis. Braided Knowledges sought to facilitate positive collaboration for sustainability.

University of Richmond students served as scribes, carefully documenting each session. Guests from nine countries participated in excursions in and along the James River. Noted environmental scholar and activist David Orr served as the summit’s rapporteur, closing out the week with a summative keynote. The event served as a reminder of the power of community coming together.





STARS Report

SUSTAINABILITY, TRACKING, ASSESSMENT & RATING SYSTEM



CAMPUS ENGAGEMENT

Assessing Sustainability Culture

The UR Office for Sustainability Commuter and Sustainability Culture Survey was administered online in 2023 and 2025 to faculty, staff, and students.

Outreach Campaign

Annual campaigns include Ecochallenge, Campus Race to Zero Waste, and the Sustainable Solutions Challenge.

Outreach Materials and Publications

Examples include monthly newsletter, social media, LinkedIn alumni group, campus signage, sustainability map, Spiders Guide to Sustainable Living

Student Life

The Ecology and Conservation Organization, GreenUR, Environmental Law Society, SEEDS, volunteering, and the Global Environmental Speaker Series engage students.

Employee Orientation

The Office for Sustainability presents to all incoming staff and faculty on sustainability.

Student Orientation

The New Student Orientation Sustainability Fair welcomes all new students to campus with an introduction to green partners at UR and in Richmond.

Student Educators Program

Rethink Waste Representatives learn the ins-and-outs of composting and recycling and train fellow students.

Staff Professional Development and Training

The Perspectives Conversation Series, sustainability education programs, and International Education Week allow staff to learn about sustainability.

Employee Educators Program

The University did not pursue this credit.

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

Community Partnerships

UR maintains relationships with the City of Richmond Office of Sustainability, James River Association, and the Sierra Club

Continuing Education

Includes courses such as Corporate Social Responsibility and Sustainable Management: Leadership Ethics.

Inter Campus Collaboration

Collaborations include AASHE, Second Nature, Virginia Association for Sustainability in Higher Education, Southeast Sustainability Network.

Trademark Licensing

An agreement with the Collegiate Licensing Company includes a commitment to conduct business in a socially and environmentally responsible manner.

Community Service

44.6% of students participated in community service, each student averaging about 4.25 hours per year.

Participation in Public Policy

The University did not pursue this credit.





Engagement Priorities on the Path to 2027

SUSTAINABILITY PLAN PRIORITIES

Sustainability Tour (2.2.1)

The development of the Sustainability Tour is essential for showcasing sustainable campus features such as the Eco-Corridor and natural areas on campus, the solar array, the UR Micro-Farm, and more.

Online and In-person Sustainability Training (2.3.1)

Opportunities exist to build a coordinated series of trainings for students, faculty, and staff to gain knowledge on essential sustainability topics such as clean energy, transportation, biodiversity, etc.

Speaker Series Integration (2.4.3)

Several speaker series exist on campus and being able to integrate with these efforts would be an opportunity to understand how sustainability could be a subject in deciding potential guests and topics.

Employees Educators Program (2.3.3)

The Green Workspace Program is being launched as a pilot program 2025-2026 school year. This program will lead to greater connections across campus and will give staff and faculty the opportunity to incorporate sustainability initiatives into their own workspaces.

EMERGING WORK

Volunteering & Community Service

Many students are already choosing to volunteer, reflecting a strong culture of care and community. By expanding volunteer opportunities, especially those available on campus, we can increase participation. Making service opportunities more visible and accessible invites more people to discover their ability to make a difference. This can be bolstered by tools and processes that make volunteering easier to find, record, recognize, and coordinate. At the same time, encouraging employee volunteering strengthens our collective impact and reinforces a shared commitment to the broader community. Together, these efforts can cultivate a vibrant culture of service that benefits everyone.



Operations

*How can campus operations
serve as a model for
sustainability best practices?*

Sustainability Report: Operations

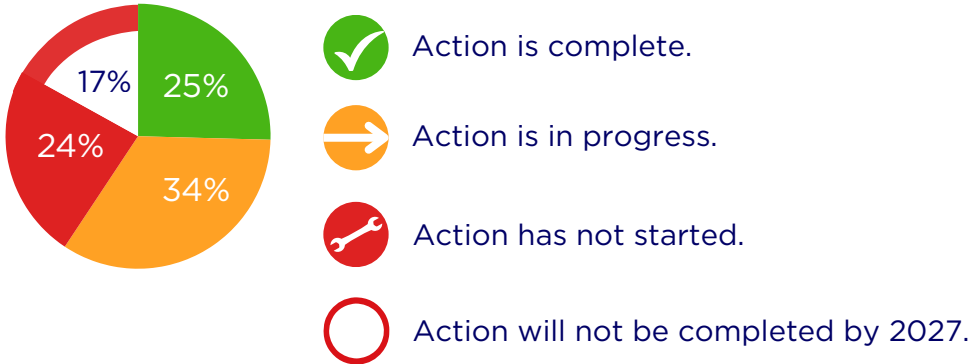
OVERVIEW

The physical features of the campus present the opportunity to model energy efficiency and decarbonization, and operationalize sustainability related to Air & Climate, Buildings, Energy, Food & Dining, Grounds, Purchasing, Transportation, Waste, and Water.

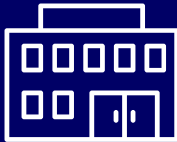
Goal 3 of the Sustainability Plan supports the implementation of sustainable practices in campus operations and services that steward the natural world and support human well-being.

PROGRESS SINCE 2019

The pie chart represents the percentage of actions from Goal 3 of the Sustainability Plan that are completed, in progress, or have not been started.



DATA HIGHLIGHTS



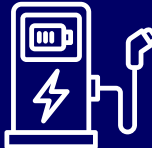
17

Certified green buildings on campus



#1

National Campus Race to Zero Waste GameDay Challenge (3 times!)

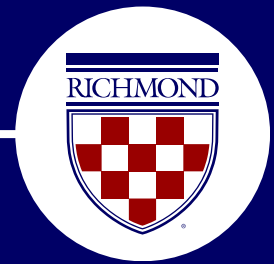


17

EV charging ports on campus

Sustainability Plan





Goal 3: Operations








SUSTAINABILITY AS MEASURED AT UNIVERSITY OF RICHMOND

“Implement sustainable practices in campus operations and services that steward the natural world and support human well-being.”



3.1 Implement resource-efficient and environmentally responsible design, construction, and operation practices in all campus building projects.

-  3.1.1 Provide energy and water metering on all building systems to track performance and report usage data.
-  3.1.2 Maintain a third-party green building rating system standard for new buildings (equivalent to LEED Silver equivalent or better) for all new buildings and major renovations.
-  3.1.3 Perform a cost-benefit analysis on the adoption of a third-party green building rating system for existing building renovations.
-  3.1.4 Explore the feasibility of constructing a net-zero energy building, which generates 100% of its energy on-site.


3.2 Update the 2010 Climate Action Plan with greenhouse gas reduction strategies that accelerate the achievement of carbon neutrality.

-  3.2.1 Match 100% of UR’s electricity usage with procurement from renewable sources by 2021.
-  3.2.2 Conduct a solar feasibility study of campus and UR-owned properties to assess the potential to increase renewable energy production, including site selection, availability of energy, equipment specification, financial analysis, and risk assessment.
-  3.2.3 Implement and publicize energy policies that improve outdoor air quality and minimize pollutants from stationary and mobile sources.
-  3.2.4 Investigate best practices in carbon offsets and carbon sequestration, including utilization of University-owned lands.
-  3.2.5 Explore an internal carbon accounting model that would establish baseline measures and encourage building and department-specific reduction targets.




3.3 Reduce energy use intensity (energy per square foot per year) 40% below 2009 levels by 2025.

-  3.3.1 Implement an energy conservation management plan to identify, prioritize, implement, and track energy reduction and efficiency opportunities.
-  3.3.2 Establish an energy management system to guide and monitor energy usage and energy use intensity on campus.




3.4 Identify opportunities to increase procurement of sustainable food at the capacity needed for consistent, high-quality meals.

-  3.4.1 In partnership with Dining Services, establish a food system working group comprising students, staff, and faculty to benchmark best practices in sustainable food procurement, increase collaboration across stakeholder groups, and publicize green dining efforts.
-  3.4.2 Track and assess sustainable food purchases annually based on the STARS and Real Food criteria (including local, community-based, organic, ecologically sound, humane, and fair).
-  3.4.3 Using STARS and Real Food criteria as a guide, establish UR-specific sustainable food procurement targets by 2020.
-  3.4.4 Implement a sustainable food plan aimed at achieving UR-specific sustainable food procurement targets by 2021.
-  3.4.5 Explore sustainable procurement guidelines for catering and off-campus food vendors.



3.5 Reduce food waste to the landfill by 50% by 2025.

-  3.5.1 Research best practices in food recovery, establish internal processes for both recovery and reuse, and develop partnerships to streamline and increase capacity for food donations.
-  3.5.2 Pilot back-of-the-house food composting collection in Retail Dining by 2020.
-  3.5.3 Compost all back-of-the-house and postconsumer food waste by 2025.






3.6 Develop innovative funding mechanisms to support sustainable practices on campus.

-  3.6.1 Revisit the proposal and selection process of green revolving fund projects to accelerate implementation of strategies that reduce the University's environmental impact, provide a long-term economic return, and promote education and engagement of campus stakeholders.
-  3.6.2 Explore development of a green fund that provides small, competitive grants for the campus community to develop sustainability solutions.
-  3.6.3 Investigate the feasibility of adopting a revenue-neutral carbon charge on campus.




3.7 Enhance the University's ability to engage with the campus community on issues of responsible investing.

-  3.7.1 In partnership with Spider Management, explore the development of a committee on responsible investing aimed at increasing understanding of institutional investments and providing input on matters of importance to students, faculty, and staff.
-  3.7.2 Collaborate with other universities who have established responsible investment committees to benchmark best practices.

3.8 Increase the amount of environmentally and socially preferable purchases as a percentage of total goods purchased.

-  3.8.1 Explore the feasibility of setting internal sustainable purchasing standards and identifying how to implement data tracking measures.
-  3.8.2 Formalize and publicize sustainable procurement policies on purchased goods, including electronics (e.g., EPEAT), appliances (e.g., Energy Star), paper goods (e.g., Forest Stewardship Council), and cleaning supplies (e.g., Green Seal).
-  3.8.3 Identify professional development opportunities in sustainable purchasing for Procurement personnel.
-  3.8.4 Research sustainable purchasing standards and available training for personnel who purchase goods on campus.
-  3.8.5 Examine best practices of total cost of ownership and total life-cycle cost implementation in purchasing and decision making.



3.9 Research and implement sustainability procurement standards for vendors.




-  3.9.1 Reinforce prioritization for working with women- and minority-owned enterprises.
-  3.9.2 Identify a process to certify that all Richmond trademarked apparel is produced under fair labor conditions.
-  3.9.3 Develop environmental standards and practice guidelines for major business partners.

3.10 Design and maintain campus landscapes in a manner that supports ecological health, advances student learning, and promotes recreation.



-  3.10.1 Develop and implement a Sustainable Landscape Management Plan following guidelines from the Sustainable SITES initiative.
-  3.10.2 Alongside partners in Biology and Environmental Studies, generate UR biodiversity management and invasive species management plans for the Eco-Corridor, Westhampton Lake, Westhampton Green, and other open spaces on campus.
-  3.10.3 Conduct an assessment to identify endangered or vulnerable species, environmentally sensitive areas on University land.
-  3.10.4 Explore the development and use of outdoor spaces on campus and along the James River to support education, wellness, recreation, and research, including open-air classrooms, gathering spaces, and field sites.
-  3.10.5 Research the appropriateness and availability of using battery-powered landscape equipment on campus.

3.11 Manage campus lands to steward the James River watershed, increase water capture, and reduce stormwater impacts.





-  3.11.1 Create a watershed management plan centered on restoring the ecological function, aesthetic beauty, educational capacity, and recreational function of Westhampton Lake, and implement best management practices to increase groundwater recharge and reduce nutrient and sediment flow to the James River.
-  3.11.2 Explore use of Westhampton Lake as a source of on-campus irrigation.

-  3.11.3 Restore Little Westham Creek and implement best management practices to improve stormwater management in the Eco-Corridor.
-  3.11.4 Increase use of low-water landscape features and install rain catchment systems and cisterns in areas where irrigation is desired.
-  3.11.5 Assess the ratio of hardscape (paved, wood, or stone surfaces) to softscape (living objects in the landscape) to inform need for permeable paving surfaces.

3.12 Reduce potable water usage 50% below 2010 levels by 2025.

-  3.12.1 Investigate and utilize* on-site technologies for water reclamation and reuse for utility and landscape purposes.
-  3.12.2 Sub-meter water usage in each building, set reduction targets based on established baseline, and implement efficiency and reduction strategies.

3.13 Reduce carbon emissions related to transportation and mobility.





-  3.13.1 Increase the use of carpooling, public transit, walking, and/or biking as primary means of student, staff, and faculty transportation.
-  3.13.2 Study the feasibility of offsetting emissions associated with University-supported travel.
-  3.13.3 Increase the number of electric and gas-electric hybrid vehicles, solar-powered electric vehicle charging stations, and infrastructure to support them.
-  3.13.4 Transition 30% of the University fleet to electric vehicles by 2025.

3.14 Improve campus connectivity with the greater Richmond region.




-  3.14.1 Build community and agency partnerships to make the roadways surrounding campus safer for biking and walking in alignment with the City of Richmond's Complete Streets Policy.
-  3.14.2 Explore the opportunity to expand the Green Bike program and connect with City of Richmond on potential partnership regarding bicycles, scooters, and other personal transportation options.
-  3.14.3 Increase the number of sidewalks, bike lanes, and car-free areas to promote a more pedestrian friendly campus as described in the 2011 Campus Master Plan.
-  3.14.4 Pursue certification in the League of American Cyclists Bicycle Friendly University program.

**3.12.1 After investigation, we determined that water reclamation is not a feasible option at this time.*

3.15 Divert 75% of materials from the landfill by 2025.

-  3.15.1 Achieve Rethink Waste rollout (co-location of bins; standardized signage, bins, and bag colors) across campus by 2020.
-  3.15.2 Implement a pre- and post-consumer composting program on campus.
-  3.15.3 Explore the feasibility of a materials sort center on or near campus.
-  3.15.4 Provide in-person and online Rethink Waste training for all students, staff, and faculty.

3.16 Reduce gross waste totals by 15% by 2025.

-  3.16.1 Research and adopt processes that consider the end of product life in purchasing decisions, including questions of avoidance, reduction, reuse, and recycling.
-  3.16.2 Implement and promote reuse strategies across campus and develop measures to minimize prevalence of single-use disposable items.
-  3.16.3 Develop internal systems and external partnerships to improve capacity for capture of usable goods, including creation of a space for students, faculty, and staff to exchange, donate, and purchase items that would otherwise go to the landfill.

Operation Highlights

The Spider Exchange

The Spider Exchange, the campus thrift store, is a spot where students, faculty, and staff are all invited to donate items or “shop” for gently used items. The UR community enjoys utilizing the store to reduce waste while saving money. In 2024, the Spider Exchange also started offering free refills for items like shampoo and soap if students bring their own containers. This is modeled after a local refill shop, Eco Inspired.

Eco-Corridor

The University of Richmond Eco-Corridor is an 18-acre ecological restoration and outdoor learning space along Little Westham Creek that serves as a vibrant hub for nature connection, hands-on research, and outdoor recreation. Featuring a multi-use trail, restored stream, native plantings, and a new orchard and food forest, the Eco-Corridor serves as both a living laboratory for students and faculty and a community greenway connecting campus to the James River. Designed to improve water quality, enhance biodiversity, and foster environmental engagement, the Eco-Corridor reflects the university’s commitment to ecological stewardship and experiential learning.

Natural Areas Steward

In 2023, UR created the position of Natural Areas Steward as part of the professional staff team in the Office for Sustainability. The Natural Areas Steward oversees the design, management of, education within the Eco-Corridor.



If they knew the difference in methane emissions between organic waste breaking down in the landfill versus composting, our students would be more motivated to sort.”

**David Donaldson
Manager, Rethink Waste**

Climate & Energy

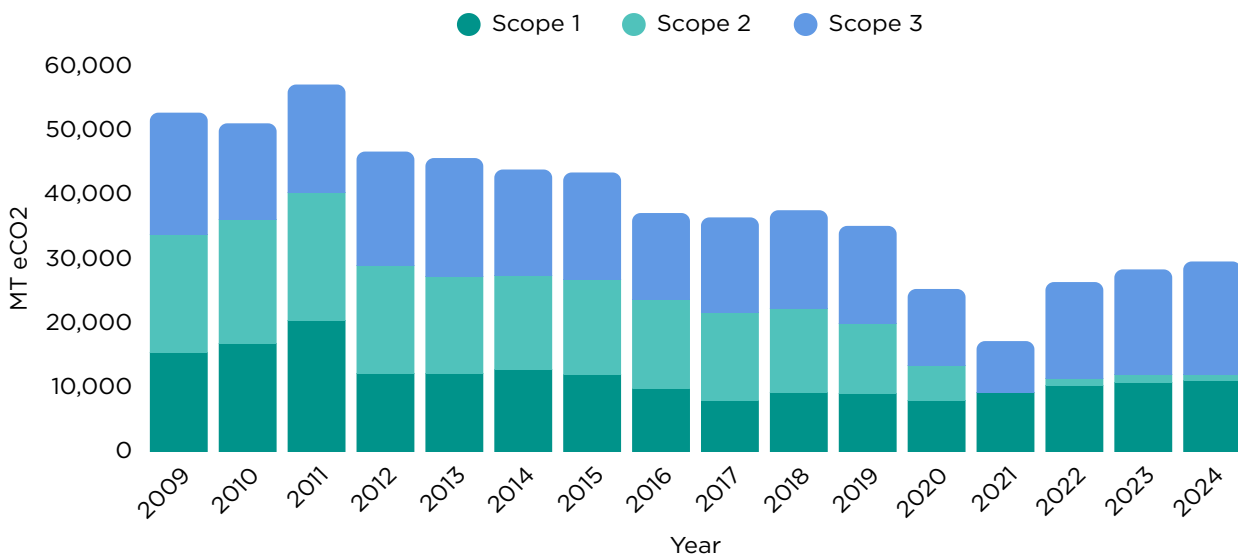
The University of Richmond aims for carbon neutrality by 2050, with interim emission-reduction targets of 30% by 2020 and 65% by 2035, as outlined in its 2010 Climate Action Plan. Having met the 2020 goal, the University continues to advance campus energy management through LED retrofits, utility management software, and investment in renewable energy. Classrooms use energy-efficient lighting with timed controls, and all residential appliances meet Energy Star standards. Energy audits in 2011 and 2018, as well as a 2024 building-by-building carbon step down plan, have driven efficiency projects like HVAC upgrades and a shift from propane to electric dryers. Additional efforts include internal funding for energy projects, renewable energy power purchase agreements for on-site and off-site solar, and expanded energy management staff to improve metering, tracking, and building automation through a central energy management system. 2025 upgrades to the central steam plant are projected to cut emissions at the site by 50%.

Roadmap to Decarbonization

In 2022, UR was awarded funds from Second Nature to work with design firm Brailsford & Dunlavy to create a plan that would help eliminate fossil fuel usage in campus operations. The roadmap's five key areas of work: strategic energy management, clean energy transition, renewable energy expansion, education & culture change, and stewardship & governance. These elements informed the 2025 UR Campus Plan and will support the next update to the Climate Action Plan.

Greenhouse Gas Emissions, 2009-2024

As of Fiscal Year 2024, UR has reduced its emissions by 23,214 metric tons of CO₂e, 44% below baseline levels.



Invasive Species Management via Goat Browsing

In an effort to respond to non-native plant material on campus, UR has enlisted the help of goats to assist with the removal of invasive plant species. Though still novel, goat browsing is an increasingly common, environmentally-friendly landscape management practice that reduces the need for herbicide and gas-powered equipment. Goats are well-suited to remove plants such as porcelain berry, English ivy, Japanese stilt grass, Chinese privet, and other hard to manage non-natives that can be resistant to other methods of removal.

Orchard and Food Forest

In 2024, the Office for Sustainability received \$25,000 from the Oak Foundation to help establish the Eco-Corridor Orchard and Food Forest. In the fall of 2024, goats came to clear out a large area in the Eco-Corridor in preparation for the orchard. Adjacent to Abby's Garden, you will find a newly fenced area where fruit trees, shrubs, and perennials have been planted.



The Orchard and Food Forest not only enhances biodiversity and increases tree canopy coverage, but also provides opportunities for experiential education at UR. By applying principles of permaculture design and ecology, the Orchard and Food Forest works with rather than against nature and serves as an incubation site for food justice, food access, and food education.





STARS Report

SUSTAINABILITY, TRACKING, ASSESSMENT & RATING SYSTEM



Air & Climate

Greenhouse Gas Emissions

From 2009 to 2023, Scope 1 and 2 emissions decreased by 65%.

Emissions Inventory and Disclosure

UR's GHG inventory was developed using the web-based Sustainability Indicator Management and Analysis Platform (SIMAP).

Buildings

Building Design and Construction

There are 17 buildings green buildings on campus certified with LEED (15) or EarthCraft (2).

Building Operations and Maintenance

We do not manage existing building space in accordance with a green building rating system.

Energy

Building Energy Efficiency

UR has reduced energy use per square foot by 17% since 2009.

Clean and Renewable Energy

The University matches nearly 100% of its purchased electricity usage with renewable energy production.

Food & Dining

Sustainable Dining

Support for local businesses, signage to explain sustainable choices, reduction in food waste via Lean Path, and trayless dining are part of daily practice.

Food and Beverage Purchasing

27% of food and beverage purchases are for plant-based foods; 3% are certified sustainable by a third party.

Grounds

Landscape Management

Nearly 100% of campus is managed under an integrated pest management program that uses select chemicals only when needed.

Biodiversity

The University's Ball Property in Goochland County was the first conservation easement in Virginia, preserving the forest for educational purposes.

Purchasing

Electronics Purchasing

100% of our computer expenditures are EPEAT Gold registered, the highest achievable level under a multi-attribute sustainability standard.

Cleaning and Janitorial Purchasing

88% of expenditures related to cleaning and janitorial products are third party certified to meet recognized sustainability standards.

Sustainable Procurement

During the design stage of any major construction project, building systems are designed with life cycle costing measures in mind.

Office Paper Purchasing

17% of office paper expenditures go toward recycled content paper.

Transportation

Support for Sustainable Transportation

The University has 17 EV charging ports at 8 charging stations across campus.

Commute Modal Split

65% of students and 9% of employees use more sustainable commuting methods to get to class.

Campus Fleet

26% of the campus fleet, including cars, trucks, and golf carts, are electric.

Waste

Hazardous Waste Management

Environmental Health & Safety manages a waste minimization plan to control any hazardous wastes generated by the sciences.

Construction and Demolition Waste Diversion

UR recycles, donates, or otherwise recovers 70% of construction and demolition materials.

Waste Minimization and Diversion

From 2014 to 2024, the University increased recycling rates by 24% and increased composting rates by 167%, while reducing overall waste by 21%.

Water

Water Use

From 2009-2023, the University dropped the amount of water used per person by 20%.

Rainwater Management

The Little Westham Creek stream restoration realigned and raised the main channel and created a floodplain to increase nutrient uptake and percolation.



Operations Priorities on the Path to 2027

SUSTAINABILITY PLAN PRIORITIES

Energy and Water Metering (3.1.1; 3.12.2)

A campus-wide effort to submeter electricity and water usage in each building on campus began in 2023. We will continue to provide energy and water metering on all building systems to track performance and report usage data.

Solar Feasibility Study (3.2.2)

In accordance with the UR Campus Plan, we will undertake a solar feasibility study of campus buildings to identify locations best suited for renewable energy production.

Energy Conservation Management Plan (3.3.1)

A strategic energy management plan that identifies, prioritizes, and tracks energy reduction and efficiency opportunities will be formalized.

Sustainable Food Targets (3.4.1-3.4.4)

A food system working group led by Dining Services and Campus Business Services and comprising students, staff, and faculty will benchmark best practices in sustainable food procurement, track sustainable food purchases, establish UR-specific sustainable food procurement targets, and implement a sustainable food plan.

Catering Sustainable Procurement Guidelines (3.4.5)

We will pilot sustainable procurement guidelines for catering and explore sustainability standards for off-campus food vendors.

Food Recovery (3.5.1)

We will clarify internal processes and strengthen external partnerships in order to improve food recovery and increase our capacity for making food donations.

Sustainable Procurement Standards, Training, and Implementation (3.8.1-3.8.4; 3.16.1)

In at least one unit, UR procurement specialists will pilot internal sustainable purchasing standards, data tracking measures, and life-cycle assessment tools. UR will establish best practice guidance on the procurement of purchased goods, including electronics, appliances, paper goods, and cleaning supplies. To support this effort, training and professional development opportunities in sustainable purchasing will be made available.

Biodiversity and Invasive Species Management Plan (3.10.2)

Plans for natural areas and open spaces on campus will incorporate biodiversity management and invasive species management.

Vulnerable Species Assessment (3.10.2)

With partners in the Department of Biology, we will identify endangered or vulnerable species, environmentally sensitive areas on University land.

Outdoor Education Spaces (3.10.4)

Following on the success of the Eco-Corridor, we will continue to explore the development and use of outdoor spaces on campus to support education, wellness, recreation, and research.

Watershed Management Plan (3.11.1 - 3.11.2)

Westhampton Lake is a campus jewel. A plan to restore the ecological health, aesthetic beauty, educational capacity, and recreational function of Westhampton Lake will benefit UR and the surrounding community. We will also evaluate use of Westhampton Lake as a source of on-campus irrigation.

Improve Multi-Modal Transportation and Increase Electric Vehicles (3.13.1)

As part of a 2026 transportation planning effort, we will improve the use of carpooling, public transit, walking, and biking as means of student, staff, and faculty transportation.

Electric Vehicle Expansion (3.13.3-3.13.4)

The University will continue to support adoption of electric vehicles by increasing electric vehicle charging station availability and electrifying 30% of the University vehicle fleet.

Pedestrian-Friendly Campus (3.14.3)

Increase the number of sidewalks and car-free areas to promote a more pedestrian-friendly campus as described in the 2025 UR Campus Plan.

Promote Reuse (3.16.2)

Implement and promote reuse strategies across campus and develop measures to minimize prevalence of single-use disposable items.

EMERGING WORK

Sustainable Design Standards

While UR has 17 certified green buildings, significant opportunity exists to create a robust set of sustainable design standards for the design, construction, and operation of campus buildings. Currently in development, UR's internal Sustainable Design Standards aim to provide criteria for best practices with the built environment.

Following the Roadmap to Decarbonization

In 2024, the University developed a high-level outline of an energy strategy that will allow us to make major strides toward meeting our carbon neutrality goals. Themes such as strategic energy management, renewable energy, and thermal energy transition. Over the next two years, we will travel toward neutrality using the roadmap with waypoints like **testing the feasibility of geo-exchange** boreholes, designing for on-site solar power, and integrating a carbon stepdown plan into our design, construction, and maintenance planning.

Agricultural Aspirations

Following the momentum of the UR Orchard & Food Forest, a small plot of land in the Eco-Corridor will be the site of a first foray into farming. Between Abby's Garden and Little Westham Creek, a "farmette" will take shape, offering a bounty of educational and wellness-related opportunities for engagement.





Planning & Administration

What is the role of planning and administration for addressing grand challenges of the 21st century?

Sustainability Report: Planning & Administration

OVERVIEW

To implement effective policies and organizational structures that support a culture of sustainability, attention is needed in the areas of coordination and planning, belonging and affordability, investment and finance, and well-being.

Goal 4 of the Sustainability Plan supports the identification and activation of organizational systems, resources, partnerships, and processes that support weaving sustainability into the fabric of the University.

To do so, sustainability must be integrated into the disciplines, departments, and activities beyond which it is traditionally found. Fulfillment of this goal will expand understanding of sustainability so that it includes more than the environment and increase resources so that individuals and offices can more easily contribute to the University's sustainability goals.

PROGRESS SINCE 2019

The pie chart represents the percentage of actions from Goal 4 of the Sustainability Plan that are completed, in progress, or have not been started.



DATA HIGHLIGHTS



2x

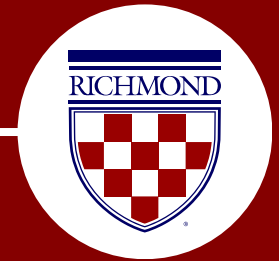
Growth of Office for Sustainability since 2019



12+

Sustainability related partners with the Bonner Center for Civic Engagement

Sustainability Report: Planning & Administration



SUSTAINABILITY AS MEASURED AT UNIVERSITY OF RICHMOND

“Identify and activate organizational systems, resources, partnerships, and processes that support weaving sustainability into the fabric of the University.”

4.1 Build UR’s capacity to achieve Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education (AASHE) Sustainability Assessment, Tracking & Rating System (STARS) Gold by 2021 and STARS Platinum by 2024.

- 4.1.1 Increase financial and human resources available to the Office for Sustainability in order to manage institutional sustainability goals, collaborate with administrative, operational, and academic partners, assess and report on UR’s sustainability performance, communicate effectively, and develop new programming.
- 4.1.2 Conduct a gap analysis to identify what is needed to achieve Platinum status in the AASHE STARS rating system and devise improvements to close the gap by 2024.

4.2 Support the ability of departments, offices, and other functional units to create unit-level sustainability plans that utilize their unique abilities to advance sustainability on campus.

- 4.2.1 By the end of 2020, create online and in-person resources that help interested departments, offices, and functional units develop a shared understanding of sustainability and identify how their work may support implementation of the Sustainability Plan.
- 4.2.2 Work alongside a cohort of departments, offices, or functional units to pilot at least 3 unit-level sustainability plans that support both the unit’s mission and the goals and strategies outlined in the Sustainability Plan.

4.3 Welcome an expanded definition of sustainability that includes the capacity to create thriving communities and intersects with wellness, justice, equity, diversity, inclusion, and work-life balance.



4.3.1 Collaborate with offices, functional units, and departments that work toward a more inclusive, just, and diverse campus and community.



4.3.2 Continue to work with the Center for Civic Engagement to identify and enact strategies that will strengthen community partnerships and advance sustainability initiatives in Richmond and beyond.



4.3.3 Join forces with the Health and Well-Being Advisory Group to support a culture of wellness and the pursuit of a balanced life.

4.4 Incorporate Sustainability into development, planning & policy, and strategic communications.



4.4.1 Partner with the Advancement Office to clarify the case for sustainability as an important development strategy for the University.



4.4.2 Alongside the Office of Planning & Policy, develop a guide for existing sustainability policies, implement and publicize new policies that support University sustainability goals, and establish a mechanism to communicate, track, and implement sustainability-related policies.



4.4.3 Collaborate with University Communications to develop a common understanding of sustainability and explore the feasibility of a communications plan that increases the ability of the University to tell its sustainability story.

Planning & Administration Highlights

Sustainability and Environmental Awareness Committee

The University of Richmond Sustainability and Environmental Awareness Committee (SEAC) is an Administrative Committee and is advisory in nature. It addresses issues that pertain to sustainability at the University of Richmond.

SEAC is charged with identifying strategic opportunities to integrate sustainability into the core functions of the University, including educational, operational, and co-curricular activities. The committee makes recommendations to the Provost and the Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer.

Powering Progress through Partnership

Partnerships between the Office for Sustainability and University Advancement, particularly the Foundation, Corporate, and Government Relations teams, have been instrumental in securing funding for transformative campus sustainability projects. Advancement experts have supported initiatives such as the campus orchard and food forest, the University's Roadmap to Decarbonization, and federal and state grants. This collaboration demonstrates how aligning sustainability goals with advancement strategies can drive meaningful sustainability progress on campus.



The University has made significant strides on deepening sustainability in operations, facilities, and in classrooms. With increased collaboration, clarity, and focus, UR can advance sustainability knowledge, accelerate our climate action goals, and become a leader in this critical space.”

Amy Howard
Associate Provost for Strategic
Initiatives & Community
Engagement

Resourcing Sustainability at UR

Since its establishment in 2009, staffing of the University of Richmond's Office for Sustainability has grown from a single sustainability coordinator into a dynamic team that supports sustainability efforts across academics, operations, and co-curricular engagement. Today, the office includes professional staff such as a Communications and Engagement Specialist, an Associate Director of Sustainability and Environmental Justice, and a Natural Areas Steward, alongside a network of student interns. What began as an Office for Sustainability signature initiative, Rethink Waste, has evolved into its own department within University Facilities focused on reuse, composting, and responsible consumption. Together, the expanded staffing and the continued success of the Office for Sustainability and Rethink Waste reflect the University's deepening institutional commitment to its stewardship of its natural and built environments.

Strategic Storytelling

University Communications plays a vital role in advancing sustainability at a strategic level by amplifying the University of Richmond's commitments, progress, and expertise. Through its annual sustainability spotlight, the office highlights key achievements and milestones, reinforcing transparency in the University's sustainability efforts. Regular press releases and feature stories showcase sustainability-related research, initiatives, and accomplishments, elevating Richmond's visibility as a leader in higher education sustainability. In addition, University Communications provides platforms for faculty experts to share insights on climate, energy, and social issues, connecting academic scholarship with broader public conversations and strengthening the University's reputation as a thought leader in sustainability.





STARS Report



SUSTAINABILITY, TRACKING, ASSESSMENT & RATING SYSTEM

Coordination & Planning

Sustainability Coordination

The University of Richmond Sustainability and Environmental Awareness Committee (SEAC) is charged with identifying strategic opportunities to integrate sustainability into the core functions of the University.

Reporting Assurance

University of Richmond hired consultant GreenerU to perform an external audit on the 2024 STARS report to confirm veracity and validity of the data.

Sustainability Planning

The University of Richmond Sustainability Plan contains goals in four areas: academics, engagement, operations, and administration.

Inclusive and Participatory Governance

University of Richmond has shared governance bodies through which faculty, staff, and students can regularly participate in the governance of the institution.

Diversity & Affordability

Support for Underrepresented Groups

The University has a publicly posted non-discrimination statement, a bias response team, and programs to recruit, mentor, and support underrepresented groups.

Assessing Diversity and Equity

Higher Education Research Institute (HERI) has administered the Faculty Survey, the Diverse Learning Environments Survey for students, and the Staff Climate Survey.

Diversity and Equity Coordination

The Inclusive Community Council (ICC) is a leadership group dedicated to aligning and coordinating inclusion and belonging efforts across campus.

Affordability and Access

100% of need met for students who are awarded need-based aid; 61% of students graduate without any student loan debt.

Investment & Finance

Sustainable Investment

Spider Management is a member of the Intentional Endowments Network.

Investment Disclosure

The institution does not make a snapshot of its investment holdings available to the public.

Committee on Investor Responsibility

The University does not have a Committee on Investor Responsibility.

Diversity & Affordability

Assessing Employee Satisfaction

University of Richmond participated in the Great Colleges to Work For, one of the largest and most respected workplace recognition programs in the country survey in 2010, 2015, 2018, and 2024.

Wellness Program

UR Well promotes the eight dimensions of wellness to create and sustain a culture of health and well-being for University faculty, staff, and students.

Workplace Health and Safety

UR has an Occupational Health and Safety System based on OSHA, ANSI, and standards to identify potential risks, reduce incident of injury, and promote well-being and safety.

Employee Compensation

The minimum hiring rate for staff is \$15.00 per hour, and the University offers a generous benefits package for full time employees.



Planning & Administration Priorities on the Path to 2027

SUSTAINABILITY PLAN PRIORITIES

Strengthen Community Partnerships (4.3.2)

Alongside partners in the Center for Civic Engagement, strengthen community relationships that create opportunities for community-engaged learning, applied research, and joint projects addressing environmental and social challenges in the Richmond region.

Wellness, Nature & Sustainability (4.3.3)

Support a culture of holistic wellness by integrating time in nature into student life, academics, and employee engagement to support mental health, connection, and resilience.

Sustainability Funding Strategy (4.4.1)

Strengthen collaboration with University Advancement to secure strategic funding and partnerships that advance sustainability initiatives while supporting the University's broader mission and driving long-term institutional impact.

Sustainability Policy Guide (4.4.2)

Advance sustainability policy by collaborating with the Office of Planning and Policy to develop and implement guidelines that integrate environmental stewardship into campus operations, planning, and decision-making.

EMERGING WORK

Strengthen Inclusion & Belonging Partnership

Continue to strengthen the partnership between Inclusion & Belonging and sustainability programs, recognizing the deep interconnectedness and overlap of these important areas. Together, we can co-create programs and spaces that foster belonging while advancing a more just and sustainable campus.



The Path to 2027

FROM PROGRESS TO POSSIBILITY



Building on the momentum of the actions contained in this report, we are excited to launch the "Path to 2027," a focused set of aims remaining in the Sustainability Plan. Leaders from throughout the university will support the implementation of these initiatives in the next two years.

Under the heading of Academics, we aim to formalize our model of a Living Lab program that turns campus into a classroom, workshop sustainability learning outcomes, and create faculty fellowships to support sustainability integration. We will explore a campus-wide sustainability literacy assessment and bring expert-led training to Richmond. Operationally, we will advance energy and water metering, incorporate sustainable guidelines into campus planning, and improve management of the Westhampton Lake watershed. Complementary initiatives will strengthen multimodal transportation, wellness and nature programming, community partnerships, and sustainability-centered policy.

Sustainability must not be seen as a checklist, but rather as a defining principle that shapes how we live, learn, and lead. The next two years present a critical opportunity to translate vision into tangible action, empowering our community to drive meaningful change on campus and beyond. Through these efforts, the University of Richmond will continue to be a place where environmental stewardship, community care, and planetary well-being are not simply values we espouse, but realities we practice, preparing generations of leaders to build a more just and sustainable world.

PATH TO 2027 INITIATIVES

Academics

- Living Lab (1.2.1)
- Learning Outcomes and Competencies (1.1.5)
- Faculty Fellow (1.3.4)
- University Wide Outreach
- Literacy Assessment

Engagement

- Sustainability Tour (2.2.1)
- Online and In-Person Sustainability Training (2.3.3)
- Speaker Series Integration (2.4.3)
- Employees Educators Program (2.3.3)
- Volunteering & Community Service

Planning & Administration

- Strengthen Community Partnerships (4.3.2)
- Wellness, Nature & Sustainability (4.3.3)
- Sustainability Funding Strategy (4.4.1)
- Sustainability Policy Guide (4.4.2)
- Strengthening Inclusion & Belonging Partnership

Operations

- Energy and Water Metering (3.1.1)
- Solar Feasibility Study (3.2.2)
- Energy Conservation Management Plan (3.3.1)
- Sustainable Food Targets (3.4.1-3.4.4)
- Catering Sustainable Procurement Guidelines (3.4.5)
- Food Recovery (3.5.1)
- Sustainable Procurement Standards, Training, and Implementation (3.8.1-3.8.4; 3.16.1)
- Biodiversity and Invasive Species Management Plan (3.10.2)
- Vulnerable Species Assessment (3.10.3)
- Outdoor Education Spaces (3.10.4)
- Watershed Management Plan (3.11.1-3.11.2)
- Increase Multi-Modal Transportation and Increase Electric Vehicles (3.13.3)
- Electric Vehicle Expansion (3.13.3-3.13.4)
- Pedestrian-Friendly Campus (3.14.3)
- Promote Reuse (3.16.2)
- Sustainable Design Standards
- Following the Roadmap to Decarbonization
- Agricultural Aspirations

ITEMS THAT WILL NOT BE COMPLETED IN 2027*

- Green building rating system for existing buildings (3.1.3)
- Net-zero energy building (3.1.4)
- Internal carbon accounting model (3.2.5)
- Revenue-neutral carbon charge (3.6.3)
- Committee on responsible investing (3.7.1)
- Responsible investing benchmarking (3.7.2)
- Sustainable Landscape Management Plan (3.10.1)
- Low-water landscape and rain catchment system (3.11.4)
- Bicycle Friendly University (3.14.4)
- Materials sort center on campus (3.15.3)
- Unit-level sustainability plans (4.2.2)

*These initiatives remain important considerations for the future of the University, but they are unlikely to be completed in the next two years. They will be revisited during our next sustainability planning process.

Recognition

UR Ranked as Top 50 Green College 2025

The Princeton Review has recognized the University of Richmond as one of the top 50 schools in the nation for environmental responsibility in the 2025 edition of its annual Guide to Green Colleges.

UR Recognized Nationally as Top Performer in Sustainability, Diversity & Affordability

The Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education (AASHE) has ranked the University of Richmond in the top 10 for diversity and affordability among higher education institutions. This ranking comes from their [2023 Sustainable Campus Index](#), which recognizes top-performing colleges and universities in several sustainability categories.

Center for Sustainability Across the Curriculum

In an effort to increase the accessibility and diversity of sustainability-oriented training for faculty, AASHE designates institutions as Centers for Sustainability Across the Curriculum. These Centers, which are selected based on their experience organizing sustainability-oriented professional development for their own faculty, agree to organize at least one workshop or other professional development offering annually that is open to faculty from other institutions. Each Center decides for itself on the specifics of these offerings (e.g., format, topical focus, timing, registration rates) resulting in programs that can support faculty with a wide variety of needs and interests.

Bee Campus USA Affiliate

University of Richmond is now one of 98 campuses across the country to be certified as a Bee Campus USA affiliate. The certification acknowledges the university's efforts to make campus landscapes conducive for pollinators, which include bees, bats, butterflies, and hummingbirds. These populations are in decline globally due to climate change and the use of pesticides and herbicides.

AASHE STARS GOLD

In 2019, 2022 and 2024, University of Richmond earned a gold STARS rating. The Sustainability Tracking, Assessment & Rating System (STARS) is a transparent, self-reporting framework for colleges and universities to gauge relative progress toward sustainability that was developed by AASHE, the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education. You can read the full STARS report [here](#).

Reporting and Planning

AASHE Membership and STARS Reporting

The University of Richmond is a member of the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education (AASHE), and as such conducts Sustainability Tracking, Assessment, and Rating Systems Reports (STARS Reports) every three years. UR is a **Gold STARS** institution as awarded by AASHE.

Climate Commitments

The University of Richmond has made three substantial commitments to the integration of sustainability into institutional operations and academics. In December of 2015, the University reaffirmed its commitment to sustainability with a pledge in support of an international climate agreement.

Every year, UR updates its cumulative Greenhouse Gas Emissions Inventory and Carbon Footprint to Second Nature. After signing the President's Climate Commitment in 2007, UR released its first Climate Action Plan in 2010. UR was **awarded funds from Second Nature** to work with the consulting firm Brailsford and Dunlavey to develop a campus roadmap to decarbonization, which will inform the future Climate Action plan.

University of Richmond Sustainability Plan

The University of Richmond **Sustainability Plan** serves as the institution's guiding framework for how UR will integrate sustainability across academics, operations, engagement efforts, planning and administration. The result of a yearlong collaborative effort involving hundreds of stakeholders, the plan lays out clear steps to bolster the development of sustainability in the curriculum, support environmental management of our campus, promote a culture of sustainability, and further integrate stewardship into administrative policies and procedures.



Connect with the Office for Sustainability!



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